1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

844 787 873 enclosure. This is done to protect the woman from indiscreet onlookers. Should there be enough bush to hide her, mats are not used. A big wooden mortar is given to her to lean against during her pains. The whole place is called by a special term *fukwen* or *busaken* (the nest). Should the birth be difficult, the divinatory bones will probably be consulted and the woman will be removed to another place, inside the hut or somewhere else.

844 The baby may be born without any help, but as a rule the midwives consider it their duty to submit their patient to a *long and painful manipulation*, to a regular kneading, performed with the hands, sometimes even with the feet, in order, as they say, to obtain the expulsion of the child and of the after-birth all at once. They sometimes succeed in this feat ! They also often hurt the mother severely. The midwives think that they must be very rough, and have no pity at all on the poor woman. Sometimes the mother loses all her natural feelings in this painful process. I have heard of cases of her refusing to let the child come to the light, biting her helpers, running away. Hence perhaps the attitude adopted by the midwives. The mother must not *fahla ñwana*, viz. break down the child, a technical expression to designate unhappy births.

During the whole labour, it is taboo (1) for the mother to eat or to drink anything ; she would kill the child if she did so. Of course no man must attend the birth ; neither must girls come near. A newly married woman may be allowed to enter the enclosure in order to "be taught." It is also forbidden for the female relations of the woman, her sisters, even her mother to come *fukwen* ; they might be ashamed if their relative behaved badly and "broke her child." They will not come till the following day, when they hear that everything has gone smoothly ; then the father will kill a hen for them.

(1) We translate by taboo the Thonga word *yila* which means everything prohibited. I beg to give the following provisional definition of this term, which will be found from the first to the last page of this book : Any object, any act, any person that implies a danger to the individual or to the community and that must consequently be avoided, this object, act or person being under a kind of ban. As often as possible, I shall add the explanation which Natives give of these taboos.

551 for girls and boys. *Nhwanin* is a girl's name, as it means "girl" and *Nwandjise* a boy's name as it means "boy" (1).

553 881 787 All these birth-names are abandoned later on, generally at the circumcision school, or at the age of puberty, in the clans where the custom of circumcising has disappeared; boys and girls then choose new names. Men and women who undergo initiation adopt a new name. So do those subjected to the treatment for possession; these take the name of their pretended possessor when he has made himself known. I refer the reader to Appendix II for further information regarding Thonga names.

845 *Premature Birth.* When a child is born prematurely and is very small and delicate, he is wrapped in the leaves of the castor-oil plant and put into a big pot, which is then exposed to the heat of the sun. This is a true incubator, and the treatment is said to be attended with success (Tobane).

845 848 *Protracted Births and Illegitimate Births.* There would seem to be no relation between these; but to the Thonga mind, on the contrary, a protracted and difficult birth proves that the child is not legitimate. This conviction is so strong that when a woman knows that the child which she is going to bear is not the son of her husband (nuna) but of a lover (mbuye), she will admit this secretly to the principal midwife, in order to spare herself the pains of a difficult birth, as it is taboo to bear a "child of adultery" hiding the fact: it would cause the mother untold suffering.

Therefore, if the delivery lasts too long, the midwife will begin to have doubts as to the legitimacy of the child. The first thing she will do is to send word to the husband. He knows what it means. He takes in his *shifado* (2) a little of his *semen*, 845 848 291 mixes it with water in a shell of sala (the big round fruit of the Strychnos) and the woman drinks it. It may be that then the child will "feel his father," if the husband is really his father, and that this will bring the birth to a prompt conclusion; but

(1) I know of an exception to this rule. The son of the Mabota chief was named Nhwanin, a girl's name, in order to deceive the malevolent powers which had killed his brothers and sisters.

(2) See Annotatio 1 at the end of the volume in the collection of Latin notes written for medical men and ethnographers.

1 [See p. 616 in these categories or IN 116 -- Analyst]

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

845 848 if this result is not attained, it is a proof that the child is really illegitimate and the midwife will force the woman to confess her guilt and the name of her lover. Should she have had many and hide the names of some of them "the womb will refuse" (khuri dji ta yala) and the birth will be possible only when the confession is complete.

848 787 Should an illegitimate child be born without this delay, he will come to the light with his hands closed and refuse to take the breast. This will give the midwife an opportunity of extorting a confession from the mother. These women practise a special kind of divination : they take a broken pot, put pumpkin seeds into it and place it on the fire. If the seeds, instead of burning to a cinder, explode with a noise, it is a proof that the woman is guilty. Each explosion means a lover, and all their names must be revealed. (Tobane.) This confession is strictly private. The midwives will consider it a professional duty not to divulge the secret to anyone, even the father. But the mother must confess, as it is absolutely necessary that the true father of a child be known on the day of its birth.

848 837 789 It is taboo for the lover of the woman to come to the door of the hut after the birth of the illegitimate child as long as the umbilical cord has not fallen off. The child would die. Even later on, should the mother be sitting on the threshold of the hut with the baby in her arms, and the man pass along the street in front of them, one of the midwives will go (has she not heard the confession ?) and take between her fingers a pinch of sand from the footprints of the lover, and, without a word, will throw it on the fontanella of the baby. If the husband happens to be present, he will know by witnessing this act that he is not the true father. I do not think he will be very angry. The child is his and, if it is a girl, nobody else will "eat the oxen!" For him this is the main consideration !

845 847 As regards the birth of twins, we shall study later on the strange customs which accompany it : in olden times one of the children was killed ; except in such a case, no child is ever put to death wilfully on the day of its birth.

says: "Nsati wa mabele u nga nabele loko u nge na bukosi." — "Do not covet a woman with large breasts if you have no money..." This does not mean that she will cost more, but her father, knowing that she will not want for suitors, will not consent to let her go unless the full lobolo is paid at once. On the other hand a girl with an elongated face is admired more than one who is too broad-faced. Of the first they say: "She is pretty, she resembles an antelope" (a kota mhala); of the second: "She is chubby-cheeked, she is like a sow." A light complexion is preferred to a very dark one, because the white or yellow races are regarded as superior, and a Native laying claim to any European or Asiatic blood is proud of it. Parents, who also have their say in the question of marriage, insist on two other points: the working capacity of the girl, and the absence of any witchcraft blot in the family. Should her mother have been convicted of being a witch, the girl will be feared. However, every girl finds a husband in the land where polygamy flourishes. If he be slow in coming, she will apply to her doctor, who will prepare the *love charms*, which will make her "appear," so that she will be noticed by the boys (See page 100). If even that does not succeed, she has other means at her disposal and may go herself to make proposals to a man (wopsana). He is seduced by her, and constitutes himself a thief who has *tlhubo*, viz. "taken in marriage by abduction" (See page 119). The parents will claim the lobolo and he must pay it. Marriage and childbearing remain the only carreer to which a Thonga woman can look forward. Hence a number of special feminine taboos which are very curious.

2) Special feminine taboos.

Some of them concern girls *before childbearing* and cease after parturition. In the Tembe and Maputju clans, girls must not eat pork, because pigs root nervously with their noses; the future child would also move its head from one side to the other, when on the verge of birth, and this would make delivery difficult. Other

843 remove the blood. The Thongas think that, as the menses are suspended, the blood accumulates in the body and must be taken away.

Pregnancy is not considered as a tabooed period. As we have just seen, sexual relations are allowed during that time, even recommended as favourable to the growth of the child. However, in view of the impending birth, some special taboos have been added to those which apply to all women.

A pregnant woman *must not drink water when standing up*. She must kneel down, otherwise the water would fall violently on the head of the child and hurt it!

843 It is taboo for her to *wrap her body* in too much clothing.
845 She must keep her belly bare and never throw her dress (kapulane) over her shoulders, lest the baby come to the light with its head covered with membranes, a complication which is very much dreaded by Thonga women.

She must not take *the sauce* of her porridge *too hot*. The child might be scalded inside and have black spots when born.

It is also taboo to *prepare the ntche before the birth*, as no one knows what will happen. The child might die!

843 The future mother must not eat *pigeon's meat*, because pigeons
825 have no blood in the muscles of their breast. She would have no milk herself wherewith to nurse the baby. Nor must she even *look at a monkey*, lest she "take to herself" (tekela) the form of the animal and the child be like it!

A woman, in the beginning of pregnancy, must not visit a sick person. The latter might die.

843 As regards women dying during pregnancy, see page 166.

766 *Miscarriages* are very much feared amongst South Africans,
731 not for themselves, but because they are accompanied by an
789 uncontrolled effusion of a blood which is a terrible taboo. The
826 discharged foetus must be buried in wet soil, otherwise the rain will not fall; the country having been polluted will be dried up by hot winds. A strange rite called *mbelele* is performed in times of drought, when all the graves of children born prematurely and buried on the hill are searched, and their contents thrown into the mud, near the river. We shall discuss in Part VI the

124 The description I have given of the *lahla khombo*, translating
178 exactly the narratives of Mbozà, Elias, and an old widower called
164 Magingi, refers to the rite as it was performed in the normal
783 fashion some twenty years ago amongst the Ba-Ronga. Now
customs are changing. There is, all around the town of Lourenço
765 Marques, an agglomeration of Natives coming from many tribes.
Immorality there has become terrible owing especially to alcoholic excesses, a free and enormous sale of adulterated wine taking place in this region. The widows are sure to find there a hundred men for each of them, when they wish to cast away their defilement. But in this promiscuity the poison of syphilis makes terrible ravages. According to our medical missionary, 90 % of the
783 Natives are contaminated by this disease. When the men up
765 country saw that their wives came back ritually purified but
178 physically contaminated, they began themselves to accomplish the
833 necessary act. This has become the general custom to such an extent that, when a widow goes to Majlangalen, (such is the name of that hell of drunkenness and immorality), it is now said of her : "She will refuse to stay with her legal heirs!" However the law of the *lahla khombo nhoben*, to cast away the malediction in the bush, remains inexorable in the three cases where the defilement is considered as being of the worst kind : if the
[845] husband died of phthisis or of leprosy, or if the woman has had twins.

Old widows who can find no lovers may be purified by means of drugs.

765 e) *The year of widowhood.* Though the widows have found
587 new husbands, they still remain in the old kraal. They must accomplish there "a full hoe," viz. a whole year of ploughing. In their new fields they leave the dry sticks of the mealies of the year before, in such a way that everybody passing by will know at once that this is the field of a widow. But what they harvest this year will belong to the new husband. They have now the right to *fambelana*, viz. to go to each other. The suitor brings clothing to the woman, and the woman pays him visits with jars of beer. They belong more or less to each other. But the marriage of the inherited woman is not absolutely settled. Her

Latin Notes for Medical Men and Ethnographers

291 "Annotatio prima (P. 40).--'Shifado' quo quisque Thonga
845 extremum penem vestit, spheroides excavataque res est;
848 quod tegimentum ex iis, quae ad pudorem et munditiem perti-
881 nent, postulatur. Si quis schifado suum amisit, ei dedecoriest."

Note 1 (page 40). Shifado, with which every Thonga covers the end of his penis, is a spherical and hollowed-out object; this covering is demanded from those who are concerned with decency and cleanliness. If anyone has lost his schifado [sic] he is disgraced.

"Olim apud Thonga, qui a populo Zulo illum morem acceperunt, viri, quod linguâ 'mbayi' id est fistulam quandam ex foliis textis palmae quae 'milala' dicitur, ferre solebant.

[At one time among the Thonga, who took over this custom from the Zulu people, the men used to wear what in their language is called mbayi, that is, some kind of tube made of palm leaves woven together which is called milala.]

"Ultima 'mbayi' anno 1895 vel 1896 post Christum natum visa sunt. Quod shifado ex parvae cucurbitae cortice aut duro et excavato accurateque polito ligno factum, summo veretro affixum, minime incommode ferre videntur."

[The last mbayi were seen in the year 1895 or 1896. Because the shifado is made of the rind of a small gourd or of hard, hollowed-out and carefully polished wood, and attached at the top of the private parts, it seems that it can be worn with the minimum of discomfort.]

833 "Annotatio secunda (P. 56). S. n. i, sc. semine non im-
851 misso. Ad hoc, marito sperma foras spargendum est (a nga
842 mu weleri): hic est coitus rite factus et quasi lustralis. Inde,
765 uxor in manus utriusque sordes (thyaka ra bona) sumit, qui-
783 bus umbilicum illinit."

[Note 2 (page 56). S. n. i., that is, the semen has not been injected. Moreover the husband must eject his sperms outside of the body (a nga mu weleri): this is the coitus properly executed and, as it were, lustral. Then the wife takes in her hands the filth of both (thyaka ra bona) and smears the navel with it.]

"Annotatio tertia (P. 57). Corpus infimum pueri ex adverso et a tergo peni pater tangit.

[Note 3 (page 57). The father touches with his penis the lowest part of the boy's body from the front and from behind.]

831 "Annotatio quarta (P. 88). Hae sunt formulae:
881 Shana khololwane ma ri tiba le'ri onhaka milebe?
Novistisne avem quae labra minora laedit?

202 618 crocodiles.) For the Mavundjas: *Kahlamba ntjhaba yo nonoha!* (The big mountain, difficult to climb.) (1)

224 643 825 845 I have already described the part of a slain animal which is to be given to the chief, when speaking of the prerogatives of the master of the country (I. p. 406). Here are some supplementary details: The general idea is that he must receive that part of the body which was in contact with the soil, because the chief is the owner of the soil. In the case of smaller antelopes however he does not claim anything. For the eland he requires, in addition to the ordinary tribute, half of the *bofu* i. e. of the paunch of fat which is found round the heart of this animal and which is believed to possess precious medicinal properties (especially for new-born children born with a membrane round the head). As regards buffaloes and other big animals, should they be killed far away from home, their meat is cut into strips (misha-katsu) and two bundles are brought back to the chief; it is also the rule that the head of any beast of great size should be eaten on the bandla, the meeting-place of the men in the capital.

224 643

Buffalo hunter with his victim.

224 824 So far I have described hunting with assegais, sticks and dogs. But Thongas possess another method of killing big animals, a method which is perhaps more ancient and which has sometimes proved very useful. This is the *marindji trap*, i. e. a large pit dug in the earth, covered with branches and full of pointed stakes upon which the animal falls and impales itself. These stakes are made

(1) The Pedis have the same custom. The Ba-Khaha cry: "Haratsha! Mugoni! We"! This expression comes from the verb *ratsha*, to cross a river on a tree trunk, as the Khaha clan is said to have been held back in its ancient migrations by a swollen river and to have *ratsha* it successfully. The remembrance of this feat of their ancestors has remained and has given rise to this rallying cry. Other Pedis say: *'Stoantja khomo,"* viz., "the killer will be given an ox for his reward."

But the terrible calamity of drought is brought into direct
relation with some physiological phenomena which no one would 789
have thought of in this connection : the miscarriage of women 821
when the foetus has not been dealt with according to rule, the 843
birth of twins, the death of children not yet received into the tribe 845
by the ceremony of *boha puri* (I. p. 56) and not buried in wet 766
ground ; these are the great natural causes which prevent rain 171
from falling! I have met with this conception all over the
Thonga tribe. I found it also amongst the Pedis of the Trans-
vaal, who firmly believe it, and it would be most interesting to
know if Suthos, Zulus, and Hottentots have the same superstitions. Let me quote the *ipsissima verba* of Mankhelu, the great 789
medicine-man of the Nkuna Court. I shall never forget the 821
earnest tone of his voice, his deep conviction, when he uttered 843
to me the following words, as a kind of revelation : "When a 783
woman has had a miscarriage, when she has let her blood flow
secretly and has buried the abortive child in an unknown place,
it is enough to make the burning winds blow, and to dry up all the
land : the rain can no longer fall, because the country is no longer
right (tiko a ra ha lulami). Rain fears that spot. It must stop
at that very place and can go no further. This woman has been
very guilty. She has spoilt the country of the chief, because she
has hidden blood which had not yet properly united to make a
human being. That blood is taboo! What she has done is taboo.
It causes starvation."

"What then must be done?" — "The chief will collect his men and ask them : 'Are you in a normal state?' (lit. are you right?). They answer : 'Such and such a woman was pregnant but nobody knows what she has brought forth.' This woman will be arrested and told to go and show us where she has put it. The earth is dug up ; the hole is sprinkled with a decoction made of two drugs prepared in a special pot, the *mbendula* and *nyangale* ; the woman herself must wash her body every day with that medicine. Then a little of the earth taken from the hole will be scraped up and thrown into the river ; water drawn from the river will be poured into the hole : the country will be well again, and then the rain will come.

"Moreover, we, the medicine-men, after having sent old

"it is the law of the country!" Every one consents to the suspension of the ordinary laws! (1)

Amongst the Rongas, I did not hear of any connection between prematurely born children and rain. When the mbelele rite is performed, a mother of twins must lead the procession of women who draw water and pour it on the graves of the twins in order to secure the rain. They also clean all the wells (kuha tinhlobo), digging them afresh and removing any filth in the water. It may be that the corpse of a twin, if it has been buried in dry ground, will be dug out of its grave and buried again near the river, or they will go in procession and pour water on the grave. This will influence Heaven, which is killing the earth by the terrible heat of the sun. The burning October winds will cease and the rain will fall.

There is something mysterious about all these customs. Considered merely as ideas regarding Nature and natural phenomena, I believe their essential meaning to be this : — there are some cases of human birth which are taboo. While any birth is taboo, owing to the lochia, that of children prematurely born is doubly dangerous. Abnormal children, such as twins, children who have died before the "boha puri" rite (I. p. 56), in some clans also children who cut their upper teeth first, share this noxious character. They are a calamity for the whole land as they are connected with the mysterious power of Heaven, and so prevent the rain from falling. The great remedy for the evil, the only means of counteracting this influence, is to bury these children in wet ground. Should this not have been done, the chief must order these little corpses to be exhumed and buried near the river : this is the aim and object of the mbelele. If wet, these graves will cause no harm (2).

How did these extraordinary conceptions first originate ?

(1) This rite of *mbelele* shows striking analogies with the Passage rites which we have already often met with in Thonga customs. This is a special period, a mourning period for the land, says Viguet, a marginal period which, as such, is accompanied by obscene manifestations, both in speech and in absence of clothing.

(2) In the Maluleke clan, as previously mentioned, these three categories of children must be *cremated*, and foreigners dying in the midst of the clan are also burnt after their death, from fear that they might belong to one of these categories and so prevent the rain from falling, if they were buried in dry ground. The mbelele rite there is called *mbelenkele*. Rangane describes it as follows : — Women collect the bones of twins,

What is the connection between abnormal births of human beings and the rain-fall? I think it can be found in the conception of Heaven which has inspired so many curious rites, and which I shall explain in the next chapter. So it is possible that, after all, the mbelele rite has a religious idea at its base.

b) *Rain charms.*

The removal of the corpses of abnormal children from dry ground and their burial near the river probably sometimes proves ineffective to produce rain. So Bantu magicians have invented a great many charms to obtain the greatly desired showers, and the power of the rain-makers is enormous. Our tribe does not seem to have developed this art as much as others. The Sutho-Pedis are masters in this domain and Mankhelu, who had been taught by them and had become a great and renowned rain-maker, revealed all his secrets to me. He possessed the drug and used it frequently, he said, having often been called in by Sutho chiefs dwelling in far distant districts, as far off as Pretoria. He assured me that he had met with so much success that these chiefs had given him oxen, horses, a waggon, precious beads, etc.! Where had he found this marvellous drug? At Rivimbi (in Venda : Luvimbi), a country north of Spelonken, not far from the Limpopo and to which he went, as far as I could make out, in 1865 or 1866. The Luvimbi people are the descendants of Luvimbi, (1) a chief of the old times (as old as Nkuna, says Mankhelu) who, after his death, went to heaven and became king of heaven ; he still exists there as a spirit, hearing and knowing everything that is done on earth. This Luvimbi is probably the same whom the Vendas call the first man, and concerning whom they have a number of traditions which I shall mention a little later.

and those of still-born children or those who died at birth ; to these they add their old rags (perhaps the cloths used for their mothers ?) ; they bring all these impurities to the cross-ways and burn them there, singing impure songs, saying : "To-day is a great day ! There is no taboo any more ! If you prohibit anything, it will be an insult to the rain ; it will not fall." The smoke of all that they have burnt constitutes a religious offering : now the country will be pure and the rain will fall. The conception prevailing among the Malulekes is somewhat different from that of the Rongas.

(1) I have published an account of the Venda traditions connected with Luvimbi or Raluvimbi in *The S. A Journal of Science*, April 1921, where more details will be found concerning this personage.

578 grains are brought to the altar and thrown on to it and the brothers
782 who wish to be reconciled recount their grievances. The offering,
593 though called beer of noise, is not really beer at all, (the cereals offered are not ground nor cooked). However, as my informant said, it is truly beer, as these raw cereals *represent* beer. Natives do not think that they have said anything contradictory in expressing themselves in this way! Notice the fact that these cereals are collected from all the granaries (Tembe). In the same manner the members of the whole family must be reconciled.

782 The same offering is resorted to in *cases of protracted births* (I. p. 40) when it is known that the woman in labour lived on bad
846 terms with another woman. The latter will be called ; she will
575 take a little water in her mouth and spit it out against the hypogastrium of the other, saying *phaa* with the following words : "The angry words which we have spoken must come to an end. May you find help. (Lepsi hi nga bulabula psi fanele ku hela, u pfuneka)". This prayer will not be accompanied by an invocation of the ancestor-gods of either of these women. A similar ceremony is performed when the bones have revealed that delay in parturition or in the child's taking the maternal breast is due to the *bitterness* of its parents in their previous relations. The diviner will tell the father "Hahlela shibiti, make an offering on account of bitterness." This will be performed in the hut. The father will come, and without putting anything into his mouth he will say *tsu* and add the following words : "Let her give birth to the child! What I had (in my heart) I have left! Let us be united again. (A a beleke! Lepsi ndji nga na psu ndji psi tjikile! Hi tlhangana kambe)." In this case the offering is also called an offering of bitterness, though it is very different from the one previously described under that name.

782 *Offering of "the Big millet" (mabele makuku).* The millet (mabele or ñwahuba) is the smallest of the cereals cultivated by the Thongas ; this offering, however, is called "big" on account of its importance and its character. It is a true *thanksgiving offering.* When the family has special cause for rejoicing, for instance if there has been serious illness and the patient has recovered, all its members are called together for the offering of the "big millet."

case in respect to the story of Nwahungukuri, which I have published in *Les Ba-Ronga*, p. 312, and in which Heaven is credited with the full knowledge of a hidden crime committed by a murderer. This idea is so far from being an innovation due to European influence that thoughtful Natives all agree that, in former times, it was more usual to attribute death to the power of Heaven. It was a common saying that "Heaven has fallen (ku we Tilo) on such and such a village." Nowadays it is rather the gods, or the wizards, who are believed to cause death.

But this belief in Heaven has not only inspired these sayings, songs, and tales; it has also given rise to curious customs, a description of which will throw more light on this conception of the Thongas. Their existence proves that we are not here dealing with the "animatic" invention of some person gifted with a vivid imagination (p. 366), but with a true tribal belief.

II. *Customs Connected with the Conception of Heaven.*

1) Heaven, Twins and Rain.

This power, which causes lightning and death, also presides, in a very special way, at the *birth of twins*, so much so that the mother is called by the name of "Tilo," — "Heaven," — and the children "Bana ba Tilo," — "Children of Heaven" (1). Now the arrival of two or three babies at the same time is looked upon by the Thongas as a great misfortune, a defilement in respect of which very special rites must be performed. I give the details of these rites as practised in the Zihlahla, Nondwane, and Nkuna clans, as they were described to me by Tobane, Mboza, Mankhelu, etc.

Twins (hahla, or bandjwa, dji-ma) are now both allowed to live. But in former times, one of them, the one which appeared to be the feebler, was always put to death, being left to die of

(1) In our school at Lourenço Marques there was a charming young girl, who was named Nwana-wa-Tilo, Daughter of Heaven, because she had a twin brother.

845 starvation, or strangled by a rope. It was buried in a broken
847 pot, like other infants (I. p. 165), just below the surface of the
766 ground, a hole being left for the air to enter, so that the "spirit (moya) may go out," in order that, for the mother also, the "spirit may get out," may be able to fly out and not close (the passages), this being a primary condition of her having other children (1).

845 But even the death of one of the twins is not considered sufficient
756 to remove the curse. Directly after birth a particular doctor is
783 sent for, who keeps the drugs needed in such a case. Shimhuntana and Manganyele were the medicine-men who were capable of dealing with the twin defilement in the district of Lebombo, and Ñwashihuhuri of the Matimela family in the Zihlahla clan. They were held only to be surpassed by the medicine-man who treated cases of leprosy. The mother has to leave the village immediately, and they build for her a miserable little hut behind the others, where she goes to live with her twins. Her former hut is burnt with all her possessions.

In *Zihlahla*, all the women assemble that same day and start out in all directions, North, South, East and West to draw water in old calabashes from all the lakes and wells of the neighbourhood. They go skipping along, and singing

"Mbelele ! Mbelele ! Let rain fall"

This is the mbelele song (p. 318).

Then they return. The mother is seated with her two babes in her arms. They throw the water over her, intoning all the while the same monotonous refrain. This ceremony is to begin the removal of the "misfortune of twin birth, which is a death," (khombo dja lihahla, dji nga lifu). To complete the purification the magician gives to the father and mother a certain drug, which is kept in the Matimela family. The mother will put some of this into the little milombyana calabash, containing the diet-drink of newly born infants.

In *Khosen* the purification is performed by the medicine-man

(1) Even if a child dies at the age of ten days or more, if it is buried in the ground, its grave must be quite shallow ; for if it were buried too deep the mother would have no other children.

alone (See *Les Ba-Ronga*, p. 414). He pours his drugs into one of the pots brought by the women, adds to them the psanyi of the goat sacrificed for the occasion, and pours all the contents on to the shoulders of the mother, who holds the babes in her lap. After this he pours from some other pot, which contains pure water, and the woman conscientiously washes herself and her children all the while. Until her purification no inhabitant of the village is allowed to eat anything, and the following day it is taboo to work in the fields, for this would prevent the rain from falling. 845 756 783

Amongst the *Nkunas*, the mother of twins sits at the entrance of the hut, and the drug is poured over the roof above the doorway ; it leaks through the thatch on to her, and thus both the mother and the hut are purified at the same time.

This preliminary purification being thus accomplished, the woman goes to live in "her shelter," outside the village. She is absolutely shut off from all the other inhabitants. She has her own pots, axe, mortar, pestle, and does all her own cooking. Nobody even pays her a visit, and people only speak to her from a distance. Her children see no one but her. To each is allotted one breast, always the same. To help her in the nursing of twins the mother must "buy" a girl, to whom the care of one of the children is committed. This is a law. It is taboo for a girl, even should she be the elder sister, to "play" with a twin. The payment of £ 1 or ten shillings removes this taboo and the defilement (shisila) connected with it. 845 853 [671] [784]

Women fear that, if they touch anything belonging to the mother of twins, if they smear themselves with her provision of fat, or if the defiled one smears herself with their fat, they will also incur the dreadful misfortune of giving birth to twins. For this reason it is taboo for a mother of twins to draw water except at a certain spot. She must select one place and always go there. When she returns from drawing water, she must pay attention to the little wreath of grass which she wears on her head to help her balance her pot ; it must not be thrown away with those used by other women, for fear that they also should become contaminated (tekela). 845 784

845 All these regulations,[1] clearly show that, for the time being, the
184 mother of twins, like the widow, (I. p. 200) is regarded as outside
783 the pale of society. But her defilement is worse than that of the widow ; so, in order to be purified from it, the rite of *lahla khombo* (casting away the malediction) through which she must pass is much more severe. According to Mboza she must "deceive" four men one after the other, in the bush, all of whom will die. She hears that so and so says *djoo-djoo*, viz., becomes livid, that his body swells, that he is dead! She knows the reason. He has taken her defilement! Perhaps the fourth does not die but only becomes consumptive. These men have been pointed out to her by the divinatory bones. Each time she succeeds in performing the purification ceremony described in I. p. 205, she informs her medicine-man, who "prepares for her a vapour bath." Afterwards, she goes to reside at her parents' house, has relations with a lover, and gives birth to another child. Then her purification is complete, and her husband goes with 10/- to fetch her, and bring her home. The lover completed the removal of the "buhahla" i. e. the condition in which a mother of twins is. He has washed her (hlampsa). A new hut will be built for her, furnished with new utensils, and the ordinary family life will begin afresh.

845 As regards the twins themselves, they do not pass through
853 the ceremony of presentation to the moon (I. p. 52) as other children do. They are weaned earlier ; immediately after the reappearance of the menses the mother begins her *lahla khombo*, which at the same time is a *lumula*, a weaning of the children. They are then fed with goat's milk.

845 Twins are not liked by other people. They are looked upon as bad characters. When the little ones begin to crawl, and chance to go towards the other huts, people throw cinders at them and drive them away, saying : "These are children of Heaven. Be off! You annoy us!" If any ordinary child has a particularly bad disposition, they often say : "You are naughty! You are just like a twin!" — "Hahla dja karata" — "Twins are troublesome" is another common saying ; and if a child is really exceptionally difficult to deal with, people say : "It is a twin! You cannot do anything with it! (A dji koteki!)"

[1] [See pp. 433-435, Cat. 116 -- Analyst]

Special precautions are taken in respect to twins when they pay a mourning visit. One of the grave-diggers meets them at the entrance of the village and says: "Do not fear, Children of Heaven." He then puts some ashes on their heads and on their fontanelles. This is done because twins are feeble (ma ni bushapu) and the defilement might affect them more than other children. They must therefore be protected by smearing the middle of the head, and the "extremity of the tree of life," viz., the fontanelle, with a preventive. The mother also undergoes a similar treatment. She must prostrate herself near the hut of the deceased, at the place where the wall has been pierced to make an exit for the corpse. Then the grave-digger brings some live embers in a broken pot, pours a little water on to them, and dips his fingers into the water; he then presses both his hands against the woman's belly and brings them round her waist, pressing them all the while against the skin, until they meet on the spine; thus she is "cured inside" (dahiwa ndjen). This will prevent her from suffering from internal troubles, to which she, having given birth to Tilo, Heaven, is particularly liable. (Comp. I. p. 151) (1).

From this brief description of the customs connected with twins in most of the Thonga clans, it may be seen that their explanation is twofold: 1) The birth of twins is a death, consequently a defilement, indeed the worst of all defilements. Hence the *purificatory rites* which bear the character of *passage rites*: the mother is secluded and passes through a period of isolation, after which she is again admitted to society after a painful "casting away of her misfortune." 2) But the cause of the defilement is not an ordinary death, but Heaven. *She is Heaven*; she is said to have

(1) Another category of persons bearing a special relation to Heaven are the *albinos*. Cases of albinism are not frequent amongst South African Natives, yet they are sometimes met with. They are called in Thonga *Khalandlati*, a word which means literally *charcoal-lightning*. It is believed that they have been burnt (hisa) by lightning in their mother's womb before their birth. "Ba tlalile, a ba wupfanga, ba bengiwi hi tilo," viz. "they are uncomplete beings, they are not ripe, they have been hated by Heaven"; these are the terms in which they are described. They are not however regarded as taboo (yila), they merely inspire disgust (nyenya) (p. 83). As regards women suffering from this kind of disgrace, other women do not smear themselves with the same ochre as they, lest they should give birth to albinos; they do not drink from the same cup. Men do not marry them, and in this respect they are classed with leper women and witches, who are also looked on as repugnant.

845 *made Heaven* (a hambi Tilo), to have *carried Heaven* (a rwi Tilo), to
772 have *ascended to Heaven* (a khandjiyi Tilo). This connection
established between her and Heaven is clearly seen in the *rain*
789 *customs* previously described. Notice that the day following the
766 birth of twins is a *shimusi*, i. e. a day of rest. Nobody tills the ground, fearing that it would prevent rain from falling. When the *mbelele* takes place in Nondwane and Zihlahla (p. 318), the half naked women who are sent to clean the wells take with them a mother of twins. This is no doubt in order to show them where the graves of twins are. But there is also another reason. In the sacred wood of Libombo there is a hole into which the woman is put ; her sisters then pour on to her the water which they have drawn from all the wells, till the hole is half full, and the water comes up to her breasts. This will cause the rain to fall. Why is this? No doubt because, the woman of Heaven being wet, Heaven itself will be wet. Spoon did not give this explanation himself, but, when I suggested it to him, he accepted it readily. For the same reason the graves of twins are watered. In certain cases water is poured on the graves of the ancestors also, because rain is attributed both to them and to Heaven, and this watering the graves is meant to induce either Heaven or the ancestor-gods to cause rain to fall. Hence again the precaution taken of burying twins in damp places, and of exhuming them in times of drought if they have been buried in dry ground (1).

845 The connection between twins and Heaven, so clearly to
772 be seen in these customs, appears again in respect to thunder-
storms, which, as we shall see, are another manifestation of Heaven.
821 When lightning threatens a village, people say to a twin : "Help us!
789 You are a Child of Heaven! You can therefore cope with Heaven (mi kota Tilo), it will hear you when you speak." So the child

845 (1) In other clans this law is extended to children prematurely born, even though they
761 are not twins, and even to children who have not had the cotton string tied round their waist or who have cut their upper teeth first. On the other hand, among the Nkunas
772 no special connection seems to be established between twins and Heaven. These differences may be explained by the fact that all these abnormal cases were ascribed to
766 Heaven in former times, and the connection has been preserved in the various clans in respect to one or the other of these categories. Note that, in the song of the widows (I. p. 207), the king Heaven appears to have caused the death of the husband; this is another proof that Heaven was formerly considered the most frequent cause of death.

goes out of the hut and prays to Heaven in the following words : "Go away! Do not annoy us! We are afraid. Go and roar far away." When the thunderstorm has ended, the child is thanked (1). His mother can also help in the same way, for has she not ascended to Heaven? "She can speak with it, she is at it (or in it) — a li ku djone." (Spoon.)

We find in these rites a striking instance of the combination of the three forms of magic which have been explained above (p. 368). Heaven, rain, lightning, the mother of twins and the twins themselves form a connected whole. Action brought to bear on the mother of twins will therefore have its effect on Heaven ; this is *communionist magic*. This action consists in pouring water over her, (not only in plunging her into a lake). According to the principle of *imitative magic*, Heaven will thus be watered and will pour rain upon the earth. The act of the twin in commanding the lightning to spare the country is a case of *verbal magic*. All this would be logical enough and the conclusions perfectly legitimate if only the premisses were true!

Customs regarding twins vary from one clan to another. While in one tribe they are put to death, in others their advent is considered an event of great happiness. This is the case in *Tembe and Maputju*, where women are said to wish for twins, and, if certain mothers have enjoyed this piece of good fortune, others ask them for some of the fat with which they have smeared their bodies, hoping by the use of the same ointment to obtain a like happy result. The hut is never burnt. The mother gives birth to the twins behind the hut (fukwen, I. p. 37). When it is time for her to re-enter her domicile, a hole is made in the wall at the back. The husband is excluded from the hut till the day of presentation to the moon (a ceremony which, in these clans, is not omitted in the case of twins). When he is again admitted, his wife strikes his legs with a stick, in order "to cure him" (ku mu

(1) Mrs. Junod, who was for years a missionary amongst the Fañ or Pahouin of the French Congo, told me that, one day, after a tornado, the rainbow suddenly appeared in the sky. One of her female pupils at once ran to her, and hid her face in her schoolmistress' lap. On asking the reason of this fear the teacher was told that this girl was a twin, and twins dare not look at the rainbow. So the connection between Heaven and twins exists also in this tribe of Western Africa.

845 daha). Striking is frequently one of the rites of aggregation. (See Van Gennep, *Rites de Passage*, p. 55). Let us remember that the Tembe clan is of Northern origin (I. p. 23) and has retained some customs which are different from those of the other Thongas (1).

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2) Heaven and the "Nunu."

136 The following is a very extraordinary custom, and one which, 241 in many respects, greatly resembles those I have already described. 845 There is to be found, on the shores of Delagoa Bay, a small 772 Coleoptera belonging to the Alcides genus of the Cucurlionidæ 826 family. It has a proboscis-shaped mouth, a very hard carapace of half a centimetre in length, brown, and marked on each elytron with two longitudinal white bands. The Blacks call it the *nunu*. It is a scourge to the fields of beans and maize (much as cockchafers are with us). In December or January, when these insects begin to swarm, the chief men of the country order the diviners to throw the bones, and send the women to pick the "nunu" off the bean stalks. They gather them in "sala" shells. Then they choose (probably by casting lots) *a woman who has given birth to twins.*

(1) Amongst *the Hereros* a multiple birth is the happiest event which could possibly occur! The Rev. E. Dannert published in the *Capetown Folklore Journal* an account of the customs practised on such occasions by the Natives of this tribe, which occupies the Western side of Southern Africa, at about the same latitude as the Thongas. The father and mother are condemned to complete silence, under penalty of bringing a curse on those who speak to them. All the members of the tribe are convened and bring their cattle with them. The twins' family has to appear before the whole assembly, and is received with lamentations. Each individual must present himself to the parents, and make them a gift of beads, or other ornaments, in return for which the father and mother purify them by means of a certain powder. After this the father has the right of going from village to village, and claiming an ox from each one, as a kind of ransom. He becomes quite a rich man. This is the *kunga rite*, which we have also met with on many occasions amongst the Thongas (I. p. 124.). How can this diversity between the customs of the Hereros and those of most of the Thongas be explained? No doubt by this vague mysterious idea of Heaven, which is behind the religious conceptions of these tribes and in which all these rites originated. This celestial power, when it manifests itself, stupefies the Natives, for it causes "a death," entails a curse. With the Thongas it is the mother and children who are the objects of this malediction, hence the purifying ceremonies imposed upon them. With the Hereros, it is the whole tribe which is affected. The family into which the twins are born has been distinguished and honoured by this heavenly visitation, and collects for itself the fines which all must pay to regain the celestial favour!

One of her daughters, who is one of the twins, is told to throw the whole "catch" of insects into the neighbouring lake. She is accompanied by a woman of mature age, and, without speaking a word, must go straight to the lake in question. Behind her marches the whole crowd of women, arms, waists and heads covered with grass, carrying branches of the big-leaved manioc, which they wave from side to side, and singing the following song, which has been composed for this occasion :

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Nunu, muka! Hi da mabele!
Nunu, go away! That we may eat mealies!

The twin throws her little calabash into the water without turning round (for she is not allowed to look behind). Then the savage yells are raised louder than ever, and the women sing their impure songs (ta ku ruketela), which they would never dare to utter on ordinary occasions, and which are reserved for these ceremonies, rain seeking and "nunu" hunting.

On that day, as during the mbelele, woe to the man who walks along the paths! He is pitilessly attacked by these viragos, who push him to one side, or even maltreat him, and none of his fellows will go to his assistance. They all keep out of the way, for they well know what would be in store for them, should they meet the savage crowd! So they mostly stay quietly at home in their huts!

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The "nunu" is not always thrown into the water. Sometimes, to get rid of the plague, or rather to conjure it away, they start out in a band, armed with sticks, to throw these destructive insects on to neighbouring lands. It would seem that the men are mixed up in these underhand tricks, for it is said that this way of handing over the "nunu" to neighbours, often leads to pitched battles, in which sticks are wielded to some purpose, and blows rain thick and heavy! The people of Rikatla, citizens of Nondwane, used to make a present of their pseudo-cockchafers to the inhabitants of the district of Makunyule, belonging to the Mabota clan. But the true way of conjuring away the "nunu" is to drown them in the lake, and this custom, in common with the preceding ones, certainly has some connection with the notion of Heaven, the appearance of these pests being caused by that mysterious power, which

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